

# **A SURVEY OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS IN AUSTRALIA:**

Investigating the Factors Motivating Women to Become  
Entrepreneurs

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The primary goal of this thesis was to explore the main motivational factors for females to start their own business in Australia. Furthermore, the study concentrated on the 'push' and 'pull' factors affecting the decision of choosing self-employment over a paid job.</p> <p>The study was conducted using an anonymous online questionnaire. The study was participated by 28 Australian female entrepreneurs, who have established and are operating their own business in Australia. The questionnaire consists of partly qualitative and quantitative questions, which were to profile the survey participants and research the main motivation, opportunities and limitations of being a female entrepreneur. The quantitative data was collected and analysed using Webropol Webropol survey and analysis program. The qualitative data was analysed and categorised.</p> <p>The results indicate that the majority of the respondents have entered self-employment willingly, which suggests the main reasons for women to become entrepreneurs are focused on 'pull' factors rather than 'push' factors. Even though we cannot generalize these results to cover motivational factors Australia wide, (the sample being only 28 women), the results of this research were compared to previous research on similar themes, which support the findings of this study.</p> <p>The results of this study can be used by various agencies for assisting women when establishing their own businesses.</p>		
Keywords female entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, self-employed, flexibility, independency motivation		
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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää tärkeimpiä motivaatiotekijöitä sille, miksi naiset aloittavat oman yrityksen Australiassa. Tutkimuksessa keskityttiin erityisesti motivaation taustalla oleviin 'push'- ja 'pull'- tekijöihin (työntävät ja vetävät motivaatiotekijät).</p> <p>Tutkimus toteutettiin nimettömänä verkkokyselynä. Tutkimukseen osallistui 28 naisyritystajaa, jotka harjoittivat omaa likeyritystä Australiassa. Kyselylomake koostui osittain laadullisista ja osittain määrällisistä kysymyksistä. Määrällisten kysymysten tarkoituksena oli määritellä vastaajien profiili. Laadullisilla kysymyksillä selvitettiin syvällisemmin motivaatiotekijöitä sekä sitä, mitä mahdollisuuksia ja rajoituksia naiset näkivät yrittäjyydessä. Määrälliset tulokset kerättiin ja analysoitiin Webropol kyselyohjelman avulla. Laadulliset tulokset analysoitiin ja luokiteltiin.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittivat, että suurin osa vastaajista oli valinnut yksityisyrittäjyyden omaehtoisesti. Tämä viittaa siihen, että syyt, jotka vaikuttavat naisten valintaan yrittäjäsi ryhtymiseen, keskittyvät 'pull'- tekijöihin enemmän kuin 'push'- tekijöihin. Aineiston koon vuoksi (n 28) näitä tuloksia ei voi suoraan yleistää kattamaan motivaatiotekijöitä australiala laajuisesti, mutta tulokset tukevat selvästi aikaisempien tutkimusten tuloksia. Näin ollen voidaan olettaa, että tutkimuksen tulokset heijastavat naisyritystajyyden taustalla olevia todellisia motivaatiotekijöitä yleisestikin.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tuloksia motivaatiotekijöistä voidaan käyttää naisten yritysten perustamisen tukemiseen.</p>		
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## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1	The Hypothesis and the Research Question .....	2
1.2	The Research Objectives .....	2
<b>2</b>	<b>The Entrepreneur.....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1	Defining the Concepts of Entrepreneur and Entrepreneurship .....	3
2.2	Women as Entrepreneurs and History of Women in the Workforce .....	4
2.3	Global Entrepreneurial Activity .....	6
2.4	Motivation to Become an Entrepreneur .....	7
2.5	The Pull Factor .....	9
2.6	The Push Factor .....	10
<b>3</b>	<b>Collecting and Examining the Empirical Data .....</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1	Validity and Reliability.....	12
3.2	Independency as a Determining “Pull” Factor .....	13
3.3	A Desire for a Flexible Lifestyle .....	17
3.4	A Comparison to Previous Studies.....	20
<b>4</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>References.....</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>27</b>
	<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>30</b>
	Appendix 1: The online survey questionnaire.....	30
	Appendix 2: The online survey questionnaire report .....	33

# 1 Introduction

There were over 590,000 self-employed women in Australia in 2011, which is second only to the USA in the female total entrepreneurial activity (TEA) rate. Women's contribution to business has changed and they are looking for an independent and flexible approach to combine work and life. The primary motivations for women to enter self-employment have been evolving over the last decade, from being one of necessity, changing to one of opportunity. Independency and personal fulfillment have become more important than financial gain and profit.

## 1.1 The Hypothesis and the Research Question

*The key motivational factor for Australian women to enter entrepreneurship is independency, which provides them with the flexibility to combine family life and a satisfying career while making a living.*

*What are the main motivating factors for women to choose entrepreneurship in Australia?*

## 1.2 The Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to study the main motivating factors for women to choose entrepreneurship in Australia. This paper also discusses the 'push' and 'pull' factors, which are used to describe the reasons for women to become self-employed. There have been studies on this subject and the objective of this research is to discover whether the situation has changed since those studies were published. In addition, this research also includes qualitative information regarding women's motivation to become an entrepreneur.

The research was conducted as a partly quantitative and qualitative online survey with 15 questions. The participants were 28 self-employed women who own and operate their own businesses in Australia. The results provided

us with the information that women valued independency and flexibility in their decision to establish their own business. Despite the small respondent reply rate, the results were supported by previously conducted surveys with similar findings. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of why women choose entrepreneurship as a career option. It also provides a greater perspective to what an individual seeks by becoming self-employed. The results of this study will be useful for business mentors and coaches to understand women's motivations and desires in business establishment. It will also help organisations assisting women to facilitate an easier startup.

## **2 The Entrepreneur**

### **2.1 Defining the Concepts of Entrepreneur and Entrepreneurship**

There are several ways to describe a person who has established and is operating his own business. Most research investigates the self-employed as entrepreneurs. (Dawson, Henley & Latreille 2009.) Entrepreneurship is a multi-faceted concept. It includes owning or starting up a small business and operating alone, in a group or inside another corporation. Entrepreneurs are innovative and act as leaders with profitable goals. They look for opportunities and can use them to promote stability in the market. (Gedeon 2010.) An entrepreneur is a self-employed person who has established a business for the primary motives of creating profit and realising personal satisfaction (Bennett & Dann 2000). Entrepreneurs are often people who show initiative, imagination, creativity and flexibility. An entrepreneur has a vision, can spot a new opportunity and decide to act on it. (Thompson 1999.) Therefore, one can define an entrepreneur as an actively self-employed person.

Entrepreneurship involves risk taking and constantly developing, organizing and managing a business in a global market. Entrepreneurs are highly motivated, skilled and inventive individuals with the courage to bring new ideas into action. (Bainbridge Graduate Institute 2013.) The entrepreneurial mind-set is curious and seeks business opportunities by finding solutions (Hoffmann & Casnocha 2012, 147). Newton (2008) explains the basics of an

entrepreneur on his website. He suggests that entrepreneurs are open for new ideas and they seek information from several sources to get ideas. They are highly innovative and creative individuals and they are willing to take risks. They usually have good social skills and they love interacting and sharing ideas with others while acting independently in their decision-making. Entrepreneurs are willing to work hard to reach their goals and they do not give up after failure. They also like to share their knowledge and experiences with others to educate new entrepreneurs. Howard Stevenson, Professor of Harvard Business School (HBS), defines entrepreneurship as “the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources currently controlled” (Cohan 2011).

In his blog, Kennington (2009) presents a different hypothesis suggesting, that being an entrepreneur and being self-employed have different aspects and results. He states that a self-employed person runs a business while an entrepreneur is building the business. A self-employed person does something that they are skilful at when an entrepreneur is creates a business model that would work for him. Therefore an entrepreneur is taking a greater risk than a self-employed person, but in an occasion of success, entrepreneurs will more likely create a million-dollar business with a new idea.

In this paper the author uses the word ‘entrepreneur’ to describe a self-employed person who has started their own business and is managing the business or supervising the operations. The businesses that participated in the survey were small businesses with less than 20 employees. Therefore the term entrepreneur has been used to define any business owner despite the risk, money or personnel involved.

## **2.2 Women as Entrepreneurs and History of Women in the Workforce**

A female entrepreneur is defined as a woman who is managing her own business. In 2013 Dell published the world’s first gender-focused, global entrepreneurship index based on the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Index (GEDI). According to the report, high potential female

entrepreneurs are defined as “innovative, market expanding and export-oriented” (Dell 2013).

Australian female entrepreneurs are earning more income and employing more people than ever before. Female-owned firms tend to be smaller than male operated businesses and concentrated into highly competitive sectors such as personal services or retail. They are more likely than men to operate smaller businesses and earn less income. This is reflected in the disparity between the genders in wages, wealth and the division of domestic duties. (van Hulten 2012.)

Women in society have always been perceived as domestic caretakers. Historically, they have only worked outside their home out of necessity and were also expected to take care of children and household duties. Women’s pay and working conditions have been traditionally unequal to men’s. (Lonsdale 1997, 16–18.) Women have long protested for equal rights, freedom and better working conditions (Scholz 2010, 35–65).

As men fought in the First World War in 1914–18, opportunities opened for women to take men’s places in the workforce. After the Second World War women’s involvement in working life increased exponentially and they received their first perception of independency. (Ross 2002, 28–29.) During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century women’s education and entrepreneurship increased remarkably and women started to work in more respectable positions (Błaszczuk 2002). With the overall growth in the number of women in the work force there was a proportionate increase in the number of women starting their own businesses. However, women still encountered difficulties establishing their own businesses and sourcing financial help for the start up. (Bennett & Dann 2000.)

Even now women are seen to assume the home duties role in the family. However women equal 40% of working adults in the world. (International Labor Rights Forum 2014.) This perception is slowly changing and male participation in childcare and domestic duties is increasing while women are building their careers (Parker & Wang 2013). Orhan and Scott (2001) argue



that only a small part of motivational influences can be acknowledged as gender-based. Rønsen (2012) suggests that establishing and running a business require exceptional attention and effort and is increasingly time consuming. There are arguments that if women want to become entrepreneurs, they must step away from the traditional female role (Ellingsen and Lilleaas, 2011).

Some inspirational successful female entrepreneurs in history have ensured women's place in business. Eliza Lucas Pinckney created a high quality blue indigo dye for the growing textile industry in America in 1739. Mary Katherine Goddard was the first American female publisher in 1766 and became the first female postmaster in 1775. (Chessman 2008.)

Some modern examples of successful Australian female entrepreneurs are Sarina Russo, Carolyn Creswell and Tammy May. In 1979 Sarina Russo started her own typing and commercial practices- business 'The Office Academy' with just nine students. Operating for the past 35 years, the company employs 1000 people across 40 sites in Australia and the United Kingdom. In the UK, 'Sarina Russo Job Access' has been recognised as a top provider for finding work for 18–24 year olds. Carolyn Creswell originally started a business as a \$1000 venture and now makes a range of muesli, muesli bars and porridges found in major supermarkets in Australia, as well as 32 other countries around the globe. Her personal fortune is estimated to be around \$40 million. At the age of 22 Tammy May left the law firm she worked at to start her own business. The sales of her business, 'MyBudget', have grown at a 50% year-on-year rate and May manages to combine a young family with operating a business. (Alexander, Redrup & Waters 2014.)

## **2.3 Global Entrepreneurial Activity**

The Global Entrepreneurial monitor (GEM) estimated that there were 388 million new entrepreneurs in the world in 2011. This is equal to 10.9% of the adult population in the 54 countries that participated in the survey. 42% (163 million) of these people were women. (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2011.) The women's report in 2012, estimated that 126 million women were

starting or running new businesses in 67 economies around the world. In addition, an estimated 98 million were running established businesses. (GEM 2012 Women's report.)

According to GEM, in 2011, 10.5% (1.48 million) of adults in Australia were involved in starting a new business or had established their own business. This is called a total entrepreneurial activity (TEA) rate. The TEA rate for Australian women was 8.4%, which means that 40% (590,000) of Australian entrepreneurs were women. (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2011.) The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) reported that in 2011, female entrepreneurs owned 33% of all the businesses in Australia. The TEA rate has risen from 2010 by 2.7%. Only the USA has a higher TEA rate among innovation-driven economies with 12.3%. Australia is an innovation-driven economy with high economic development levels where new business start-ups are more likely to happen by opportunity rather than necessity. 30% of Australian new businesses offer innovative products and services, which are new to customers. (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2011.)

Australians' attitude towards entrepreneurship is relatively positive. According to GEM, more than 50% of Australians see entrepreneurship as a good career choice and place entrepreneurs high up in societal status. Almost half of the Australian population is positive towards the opportunities and the capabilities they have to become entrepreneurs. (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2011.)

## **2.4 Motivation to Become an Entrepreneur**

Entrepreneurship as a career choice has grown exponentially during recent years. Entrepreneurs create new businesses and new businesses create new jobs. Therefore high entrepreneurial activity has been frequently connected with high economic growth. Conversely, many businesses have started due to a lack of available jobs, indicating a slow economy. (Acs 2006.)

The motivating factors creating entrepreneurship are ambiguous. Therefore, there are many opinions of the reasons that encourage self-employment. The reasons that some choose self-employment are not clearly defined and are

usually a combination of opposing factors. (Orhan & Scott 2001.) It has not been proved that people with certain skills or personality traits are more active or more successful self-employed individuals than anyone else (Barringer 2009). However, according to Douglas and Shepherd (2002), individuals with a positive attitude towards independency are more likely to choose self-employment.

In her book, “My Big Idea”, Rachel Bridge (2006) reveals how some successful entrepreneurs found their inspiration for establishing their own businesses. The author quotes a business mentor, Emma Harrison, saying “The best ideas are the simplest ideas” (Bridge 2006, 2). Launching a new business can demand lots of research work and spending lots of money before it can be started. However, Howard Stevenson, Professor of Harvard Business School (HBS), encourages students to seek for new opportunities and ignore the present finance available. (Cohan 2011.) Most importantly, there must be a market for the new service or product that is being offered and it is important to research the potential target market before launching the business (Barringer 2009). Bridge (2006, 2) also quotes Californian entrepreneur Doug Richard saying “Almost all great ideas come out of transforming a problem into a solution. As soon as you start looking at all the problems in life as opportunities, then you will find yourself with many potential ideas to choose from.” Author Woods (2011,15) concurs with Richard saying “The best business ideas don’t come out of laboratories, they come in response to a customer’s unsolved needs.” Avolio Alecchi and Radovic-Markovic (2013, 42–43) suggest that there are two main categories that influence women to become entrepreneurs: circumstance and motives. Circumstance refers to a current life situation when motives are related to satisfaction in life, such as achievement and power.

Many sources state that there are two motivational factors for individuals to start their own businesses. Most factors result from the ‘pull’ and ‘push’ influences, which are also known as opportunity and necessity factors. ‘Pull’ factors are based on opportunity, whereas ‘push’ factors are forced by

necessity. (Orhan & Scott 2001; GEM 2012 Women's report; Dawson & Henley 2011.)

## **2.5 The Pull Factor**

'Pull' factors are usually seen as positive motivation for individuals to start their own business. People who enter self-employment by choice have seen a chance for better working conditions, self-expression and an anticipated position. (Dawson et al. 2009.) An opportunity to create a new business and a chance to introduce a new market idea are some of the 'pull' factors attracting entrepreneurs to start a business (Nel, Maritz & Thongprovati 2010). Opportunity entrepreneurship has a significant effect on economic development by creating new jobs (Acs 2006). According to Douglas and Shepherd (2002) individuals with a positive attitude towards independency are more likely enter self-employment. Furthermore, they state that independency has a higher value in ones career choice than risk, income and work effort.

The reasons why individuals start up a new business vary extensively. The need to prove oneself or having a passion is included. Some people discover a personal need for a new product or a service and they transfer this need in to a business idea. The desire to share a positive experience is often related in ones personal interest or a hobby. (Bridge 2006.) Individuals tend not to pursue better income when they are concerning their own business. They are seeking to fulfill their dream and passion with a rewarding work. (Hannon 2010, 10.) The opportunity for a new business establishment often occurs via change when the demand for new products and services appear. Change can happen in trends such as demography, lifestyle, social, technology, politics, regulations and economy. (English & Moate 2009.)

In his book "The Truth About Starting a Business", Barringer (2009), gives two dominant reasons to become self employed, which are both seen as 'opportunity' rather than 'necessity' factors: aspiration gaps and a passion for a business idea. Aspirations are objectives in life, which one needs to reach to be satisfied, such as independency, higher salary or flexibility in working

hours. Author Kate Burton (2010, 146) agrees that being aware of ones values provides a strong foundation for a purposeful life. Another thriving factor is a passionate idea of a product or a service that one wants to bring to the market (Barringer 2009). When asked a question about the definition of entrepreneurial success in a study by King Kauanui et al. (2010), respondents who do what they love were less likely to rate financial concerns as their primary motive (King Kauanui, Thomas, Sherman, Waters & Gilea 2010).

## **2.6 The Push Factor**

‘Push’ factors can also be seen as ‘necessity’ factors and they are a negative motivation for a business start up. Some have been forced into self-employment by job dissatisfaction or redundancy. (Dawson, Henley & Latreille 2009.) Self-employment as a solitary career option can occur after a redundancy when there is no suitable employment available. A slow economy creates necessity entrepreneurship. When the economy is slow and the unemployment rate is high, people are forced to start their own businesses to make a living. Businesses that have been started from necessity may have no major effect on economic growth. (Acs 2006.)

The twenty-first century has created problems with the balance between work and home life. Economic stress has increased the need for both members of a couple to be employed in order to cope with the cost of living. (Walker, Wang & Redmond 2008.) Therefore, a family’s inadequate economic situation can influence women to choose entrepreneurship to create extra income (Avolio Alecchi & Radovic-Markovic 2013). “Traditionally women were considered to be more likely ‘pushed’ rather than ‘pulled’ into small business ownership” (Still & Walker 2006, 298).

Many individuals have been raised in a family-owned business and have always had the mindset that they would become self-employed. They might not have been introduced to another option because of the family model or they have been guided by an entrepreneurial-based education. (Bridge 2006.) A child can be pressured by ones parents to continue the family business (Ward 2011). Education can provide individuals with a limited number of

possible careers from which to choose (Özbilkin & Malach-Pines 2007). Others simply want a positive change in life or have been pushed by redundancy (Bridge 2006).

### **3 Collecting and Examining the Empirical Data**

The goal of this survey of female entrepreneurs was to research the primary reasons why women start their own business in Australia. The nature of this survey was to clarify and understand the phenomena and situation of female entrepreneurship in Australia (Merriam 1995). The participants for the Survey of Female Entrepreneurs were self-employed women who have established and are operating their own businesses in Australia.

There were 15 questions in the survey, which were created by the author and were influenced by previous studies by Bennett & Dann 2000; Dann, Dann, Bennett & Drennan 2006; Douglas & Shepherd 2000; Douglas 2002; Still & Walker 2006. The questionnaire is a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions, with one question having 17 quantifiable choices. The survey was designed to define the profile of the participants and to determine the motivational factors for them to become entrepreneurs. More thorough observations were obtained through optional qualitative questions about opportunities, limitations and their thoughts on being a female entrepreneur (see the questionnaire in Appendix 1). The qualitative answers were analysed and categorised into groups with similar characteristics. The quantitative results were collected and analyzed by the data-processing component of the Webropol system.

The participants were contacted via the Internet and through business-to-business canvassing. The invitations were sent to women's business groups on Meetup and on Facebook. Invitations were also emailed to individual female entrepreneurs or sent via web-based business contact forms. As some of these groups were private, it is uncertain how many individual women were contacted via these channels. The participants were encouraged to forward requests for participation to other female entrepreneurs in their network. The type of data collection in this survey can

be called Snowball Sampling or Chain Referral Sampling. “The method yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest.” (Biernacki & Waldorf 1981, 141.)

### **3.1 Validity and Reliability**

The participation sample for the study was 28 and all the replies were used when analyzing the results. There were no dropouts. The results of this study cannot be expected to be representative of an Australia-wide research as the sample size was low which may affect the reliability and validity of the results.

Major sources of error to validity and reliability can be:

- The researcher
- The subjects participating in the project
- The situation or social context
- The methods of data collection and analysis.

(Brink 1993, 35).

The survey sample was homogenous, as it was targeted exclusively at women entrepreneurs to avoid any irrelevant data in the results. The survey was also anonymous. Therefore we can assume that the replies were given truthfully. The participants provided comprehensive answers for the qualitative questions, which were carefully reviewed and quoted. For privacy reasons the open text answers are not included in the survey results in the Appendix 2. The participants were informed of the nature of the survey, its purpose, and that participation was voluntary and anonymous. There was no social pressure on the participants as the researcher was not present while they were completing the survey.

This research was conducted using the Webropol Analytics survey system at [www.webropol.fi](http://www.webropol.fi) and the link to the survey was <https://www.webropol/surveys.com/S/B730FE638E281363.par>. Webropol Analytics is an international survey and analysis software service that claim to

provide a reliable and safe user environment for customers to collect and process data (Webropol 2014). Webropol is a tool provided and recommended to students at Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences. Therefore the researcher did not have an influence on the results since the information was entered directly by the participants and the data was gathered by the Webropol database service. One participant entered two selections in the second choice in question 11 which caused a reporting anomaly of 29 participants. However, this did not have an effect on the overall survey result. A copy of the online survey is attached (see Appendix 1).

### **3.2 Independency as a Determining “Pull” Factor**

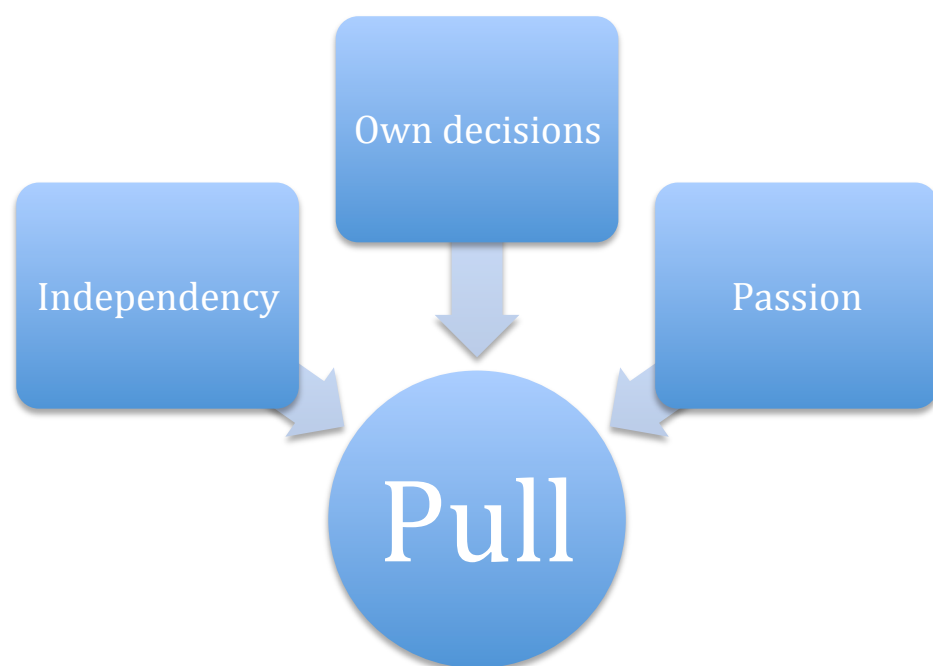
The quantitative part of the survey was targeted to define the profile of the participants. Using the answers to the quantitative questions from this survey, the average of the 28 respondents who were Australian female entrepreneurs could be described as:

- 38 years old
- Had at least one child under 10 years old
- Owned a service business
- Has operated alone for less than a year
- Worked 30 to 40 hours per week
- Had not owned a business before
- Had not sought financial support

(See the answers of the respondents in Appendix 2).



The qualitative part of the survey was targeted at the motivating factors to become an entrepreneur, as well as participants' thoughts on the opportunities and limitations of being a female entrepreneur. The results indicated that the women had entered self-employment by choice. As can be seen in figure 1, the main motivating factors were 'pull' factors (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. The main motivating factors**

The participants were asked to describe the main reasons for starting their own business and the answers were versatile. The women explained in their own words the primary motivation for choosing entrepreneurship. The participants wanted to choose their own career or to make a living doing what they love. The women also wanted to decide where they were going with their career and they wanted to be independent. They desired to work the way they like; they wanted flexible working hours based around family commitments or to maintain their lifestyle. Many of the participants

mentioned that being their own boss and making their own decisions were important in terms of reaching personal goals and being creative. They also wanted to keep their own work culture, characteristics and ethics. Location independency was also stated as essential. One of the women stated *“I've always liked to be paid from the work what I like to do, and being my own boss is the way to work just how I like it.”* There was also the desire to create a personal asset, which can be built and grow and leave behind for children. Employing others was also mentioned. Some women saw a demand for a new product or a service that needed improvement. Some replies included aspects of not finding suitable employment after having a baby, or entrepreneurship was the only way of entering the industry. One respondent never planned to start a business. One of the women commented “Corporate life lacked meaning, too much politics. I wanted to sink or swim on my own merits. There was also a strong need for the product I thought I could supply at more affordable prices.”

Of the 28 participants 75% considered independency as very important in the decision to become an entrepreneur. 71% scored “I did not want to work for anyone else” as very important. 68% selected “I had a personal interest/hobby” very important. The statement “I wanted a change in life” was scored as very important (64%). The least important statement scored by the women was “I could not find another job”. 89% considered it as not important when they made the decision to become entrepreneurs. Joining a family business was stated not important by 89%. “I was made redundant” was considered important by 86%. This indicates that “push” factors did not significantly affect women’s decisions to become entrepreneurs.

The women had comments about the opportunities and limitations of their business field. The opportunities mentioned included the value of hard work and being active in terms of finding new customers. Existing customers were also considered helpful with marketing as they use word-of-mouth. One participant said “More you work, more you get work, more you are liked, more you get work.”

The participants mentioned the opportunity for personal growth and learning

new skills. They also valued the opportunity for doing what was their personal passion. Regarding the challenges as a positive aspect are essential. One woman stated “You need to be very open to doing personal development work on yourself.” She also said “It is very important to start a business doing what you love from your heart, because when the going gets tough, you need to have the strength and the motivation to push through the challenges.”

The limitations mentioned included the challenges of balancing family and work and working unaccompanied. Lack of training, professional help and support from the business field were also mentioned. Some had difficulties with finding clients and choosing the right staff. Poor regulations may lead to untrained and cheap services and unfair competition. Some women found it hard to make a profit. Other financial issues and the lack of back up were also mentioned. Having an unfamiliar service on the market and poor market knowledge creates limitations. Government legislations were also mentioned as a limitation.

Only one of the women participants mentioned having regrets about establishing their own business. She mentions the difficulty of managing other people. The other participants had no regrets and they mention that it is hard work, but rewarding and gives them freedom. One woman stated “It is the single best decision I have ever made in my life and I can highly recommend it!”

The women consider the positive and negative aspects about being entrepreneurs. As positive factors, many of the women mentioned the support and togetherness of other women in the business industry. Another important factor was being able to combine work and family and being an example for others. Some participants believe that it is an advantage of being a woman in terms of being able to empathise and to be unique. One participant stated:

*As a woman it is far easier to be empathetic to your customers needs and established easy rapport with people. Women are much more able to multitask and be diplomatic in negotiations. I never play on the fact I*

*am female even if men try to cut you down.*

Some negative aspects that were mentioned were low self-confidence and being questioned by others. Women feel that they are not taken seriously, not taken as credible. Some still have to be the main caretaker in the family and to be isolated at home. One of the women said:

*Isolation when working at home can be an issue so it is important to network regularly and form supportive relationships with other entrepreneurs. Unfortunately in Australia this is a relatively new area for many women and as such there is often questioning about what we actually do.*

Women had some personal comments about entrepreneurship. They brought up issues about flexibility in family commitments and being able to be creative and to express themselves. The feel of camaraderie and female support was mentioned. Some women observed entrepreneurship as challenging but rewarding. There were comments about the strength and intelligence of women. One woman said:

*It has been positive move to set up a situation that will hopefully work for me when I have children. I couldn't have easily worked part time or short days in my previous career. It is such a relief not having to deal with big office politics and being stuck in a chain of command that was stifling and not productive for my career or personal growth.*

### **3.3 A Desire for a Flexible Lifestyle**

This study has explored women's motivation to become entrepreneurs instead of choosing a life as an employee. The results demonstrate that individuals do not have a common reason for starting their own business. However there were patterns that indicate that some characteristics and predominant values of being an entrepreneur were shared by survey participants.

The survey participants considered the value of independency the most important when becoming an entrepreneur. Self-management, wanting a change in life and combining a personal hobby or interests with their career were also highly valued. All these values may indicate a desire for flexibility. A significant motive for women to become self-employed, and have an

ownership of a business, offers them flexibility to combine their career and family responsibilities (Walker et al. 2008). In his article Thompson (1999) says, "Entrepreneurship is rooted in flexibility."

Independency was an important aspect for women when they considered becoming an entrepreneur. One of the women stated:

*I felt tired and unappreciated in my part time job in the public health system. Kids were having trouble with early mornings and settling into daycare. So I started thinking how much better it would be to be my own boss and make my own timetable around my family commitments.*

The participants considered independency as being unattached from corporate life and politics. They desired to have the freedom to make their own decisions and not depend on others. Mothers who operate a home business and take care of the family have succeeded to balance work and life. They have gained the sense of achievement and are satisfied with themselves. They have created an increasing income, have the respect as an equal gender, and they have become independent. (Nel et al. 2010.) Entrepreneurs have the unique opportunity to use their skills and talents to make a contribution to society while being detached from the corporate world (King Kauanui, Thomas, Sherman, Waters & Gilea 2010). The survey participants also commented about the importance of doing what they love as a job and to keep their lifestyle. One of the keys to work enjoyment is the personal freedom to make decisions using one's initiative to provide an environment for creativity (King Kauanui et al. 2010.)

A number of the participants indicated that their motivation to become self employed included the need to share their passion by introducing a new product or service to the market. They also wanted to maintain ethical standards separate from the corporate world. Therefore, an individual's personal behavior and characteristics can affect on the decision to become an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur has the ability to take the initiative to act on an opportunity. (Thompson 1999.) One participant said "Corporate life lacked meaning, too much politics. I wanted to sink or swim on my own merits. There was also a strong need for the product I thought I could supply at more affordable prices."

Finding meaningful employment in the field of one's interests is difficult, and most employees are at the mercy of their employers who are driven by profit goals, budgets and company policies. However, by becoming self-employed, the women surveyed had the unique opportunity to create their own working environment, pursuing their hobby or interests whilst making a living. Entrepreneurs who employ their hobby as part of their business have a deep passion for their work. The process of working provides them with personal satisfaction (King Kauanui et al. 2010). In the women surveyed, the individual simply evolved a hobby into a business enterprise. One participant said:

*I want to make a positive difference in the world. I want to be the master of my own destiny. I want to create something that makes the world a better place and ensures that I leave it in a better state than the way I found it. I want to earn a healthy living doing what I love and doing good.*

The survey results show that more emphasis is placed on flexibility and lifestyle than financial setup costs or profit. In their article, Dawson and Henley (2011), discuss whether the financial gain is highly important when choosing the occupation. They propose, that women consider financial motives less important than males. "The goals for women to enter business ownership are not about financial gains, but to follow their intrinsic needs" (Nel et al. 2010). One fifth of the participants of this survey received financial support for their business establishment in the forms of a loan or grant. However, there is noticeable evidence that female are less likely to source external finance in the form of bank loans but rely on personal or family sources of finance (van Hulten 2012).

Surprisingly, there were very few participants who have rated highly the importance of being part of a family business when becoming an entrepreneur. These results contrast with those from other studies conducted where a significant proportion of entrepreneurs are so because they have joined an existing family business. For some this may have occurred by choice, while others have been pressured by members of their family and

have not had the opportunity to look for employment elsewhere. (Dawson 2011.)

### **3.4 A Comparison to Previous Studies**

The study presented in this paper shows similar results to previously conducted studies as 75% of the survey participants rated independency as a motivational factor. In this survey flexibility was a common thread mentioned by the participants in their comments including several different factors from independency to a flexible lifestyle.

A study of The Self-Employed Woman Owner and Her Business by Still and Walker (2006) had 517 participants from among women business owners Australia-wide. Still and Walker surveyed the main reasons for women to start-up a business. Multiple responses were allowed which indicated that the reasons for starting a business were various. The most common reason was, "Greater independency and flexibility" with 71%.

A study of Australian Female Entrepreneurs in 1995 by Bennett and Dann showed that the respondents were motivated for business establishment by internal needs such as independency 16% and fulfillment 18%. (Bennett & Dann 2000.) A subsequent survey conducted in 2006 showed a significant change in the motivation for women to become entrepreneurs. In 1995 less than 20% of the women surveyed rated independence and fulfillment as prime motivational factors. The 2006 study indicated that 96% valued independency and 97% rated self-achievement as their motivation to become self-employed. 83% valued flexibility in working hours. (Dann et al. 2006.)

The survey results from Douglas and Shepherd (2002) indicated that people make career choices by considering risk, independence and income. A high tolerance towards risk and a positive attitude to independence are the characteristics that were found to be important in the intention to become self-employed. 95% of the respondents considered independence as an important factor in their career choice and 47%, 26% and 16% considered work effort, risk and income in their intentions. (Douglas & Shepherd 2002.)

## 4 Conclusion

This survey has provided information to the research question, which was:

***What are the main motivating factors for women to choose entrepreneurship in Australia?***

This study explored different aspects of motivation for women to start their own businesses in Australia. Women entrepreneurship is a global phenomenon and females' participation in self-employment is growing.

The results indicate that women value independency and flexibility, as well as freedom and self-fulfilment, when they make the decision to become an entrepreneur. The results of this study are supported by previously conducted studies and literature. The nature of women's motivation to choose self-employment has changed from 'push' to 'pull' entrepreneurship, which means that women's decision to become self-employed is made by opportunity. The importance of financial gain and dissatisfied employment status has no significant role in the decision making process.

The results also suggest some difficulties women encounter when trying to find finance for the start up of their business. The participants also mentioned the lack of mentoring and marketing knowledge as well as strict government regulations. However, women feel affinity and they believe that they have a special asset in the business world by being empathetic and diplomatic. According to these results, there is a need for development and improvement for women's business start-up education.

***The key motivational factor for Australian women to enter entrepreneurship is independency, which provides them with the flexibility to combine family life and a satisfying career while making a living.***

This study resulted in information that is supported by previous studies. However, there is limited research available specifically related to female entrepreneurs in Australia. Future studies recommended could include:



- Achieving a larger sample size for more comprehensive research analysis.
- A Study of Australian entrepreneurs comparing males and females, using quantitative data gathering processes.
- A study of female entrepreneurs and their use of social media to start and promote their business ideas.
- A comparative study of the success or failure of entrepreneurs with business management training, or previous management experience.
- Associating the educational background of entrepreneurs and their success in business.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: The online survey questionnaire

#### Survey of Female Entrepreneurs

This survey is one part of the Thesis for my Bachelor's Degree in Hospitality Management at the University of Applied Sciences in Jyväskylä, Finland. My goal is to research the primary reasons why women start their own business. Thank you for completing this survey. Your participation will be anonymous.

My contact details are:

Minttu Jussila

0423 342450

[f5372@student.jamk.fi](mailto:f5372@student.jamk.fi)

1. In a few words, describe the main reason(s) for starting your own business.
2. What type of business do you own?
3. How many employees do you have?
4. How many hours per week (approximately) do you work in your business?
5. How old were you when you established your current business?
6. How long have you been operating?
7. Is this your first business?
8. Did you have children when you started your business?

Yes, age of your children when you started operating?

9. Do you know other female entrepreneurs?
10. Have you received financial support for the business establishment or operations?

**11.** How important were the following statements to you when you made the decision to become self-employed?

1=not important 2=slightly important 3=important 4=very important

	1	2	3	4
I wanted a change in life *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wanted to be independent *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I did not want to work for anyone else *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wanted to earn more money *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I desired better working conditions *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wanted to work from home *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have/had small children at home *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had the finance to start a business *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had the space to start a business *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had the equipment to start a business *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I saw the demand on the market for a new product/service *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I continued/joined a family business *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had a personal interest/hobby *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My studies have been business related *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was made redundant *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I could not find another job *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other reason? Explain: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**12.** Have you regretted your choice to start up a business?

**13.** Do you have any comments about the opportunities or limitations in your own business field?

**14.** Do you have any positive or negative comments about being a female entrepreneur?

**15.** Is there something else you would like to add? Any personal experiences and comments are welcome!

## Appendix 2: The online survey questionnaire report

(For privacy reasons the open text answers are not included in the survey results)

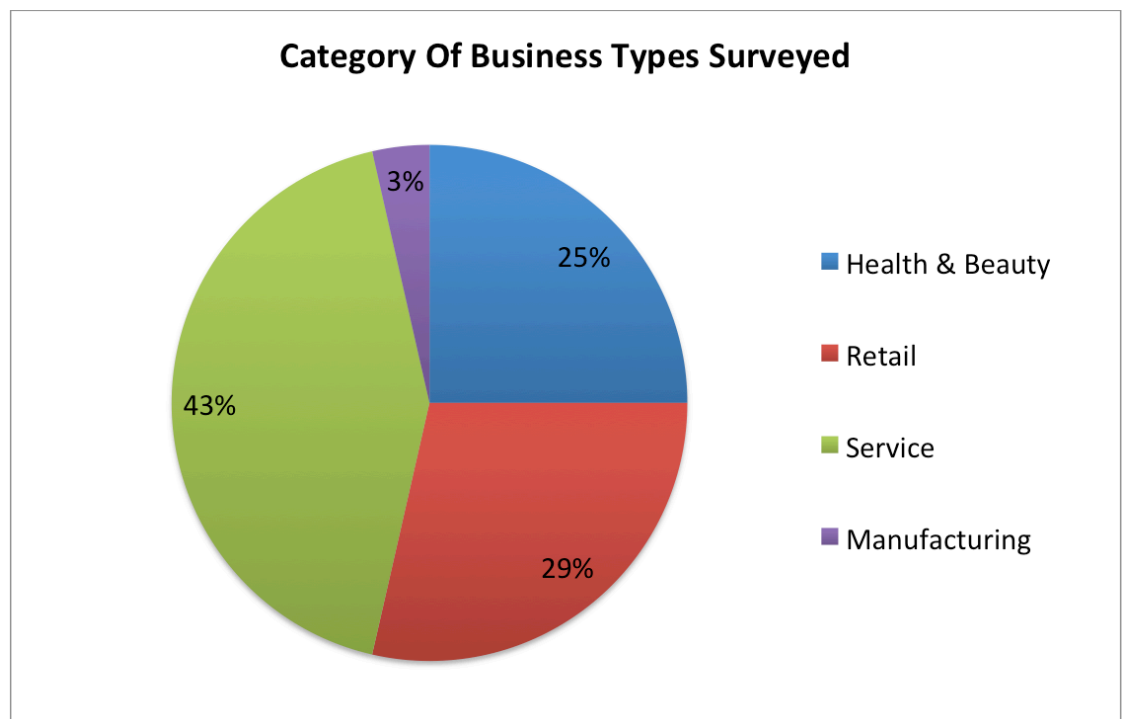
### Survey of Female Entrepreneurs - Basic report

1. In a few words, describe the main reason(s) for starting your own business.

Number of respondents: 28

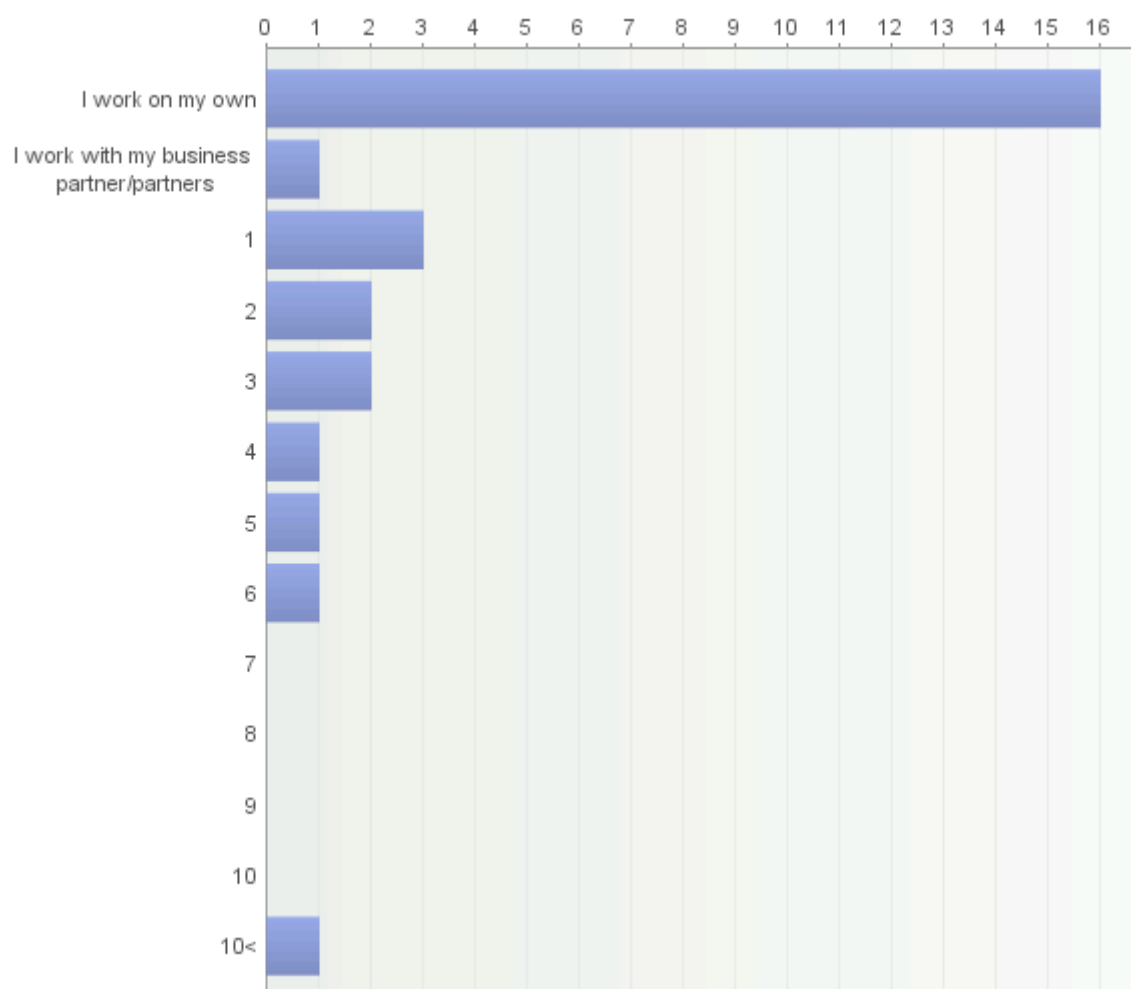
2. What type of business do you own?

Number of respondents: 28



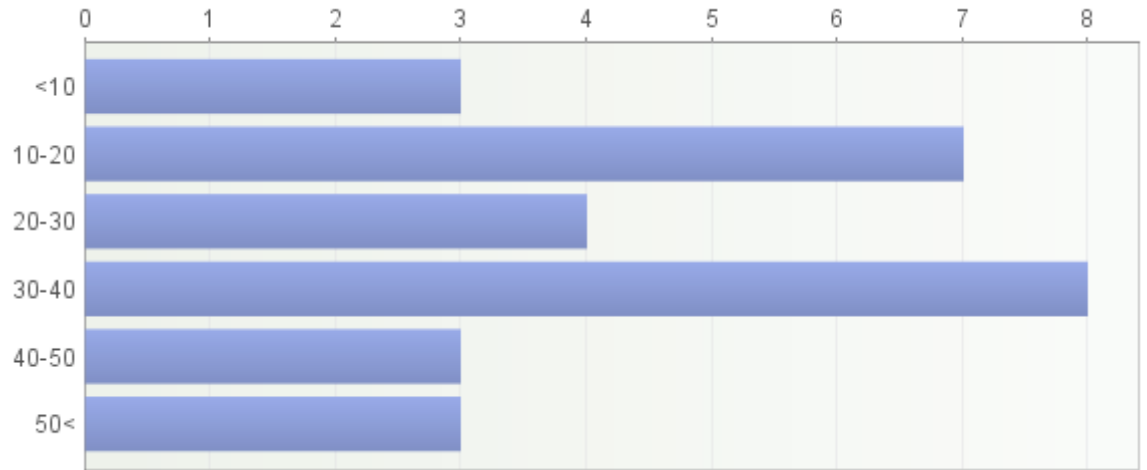
### 3. How many employees do you have?

Number of respondents: 28



#### 4. How many hours per week (approximately) do you work in your business?

Number of respondents: 28



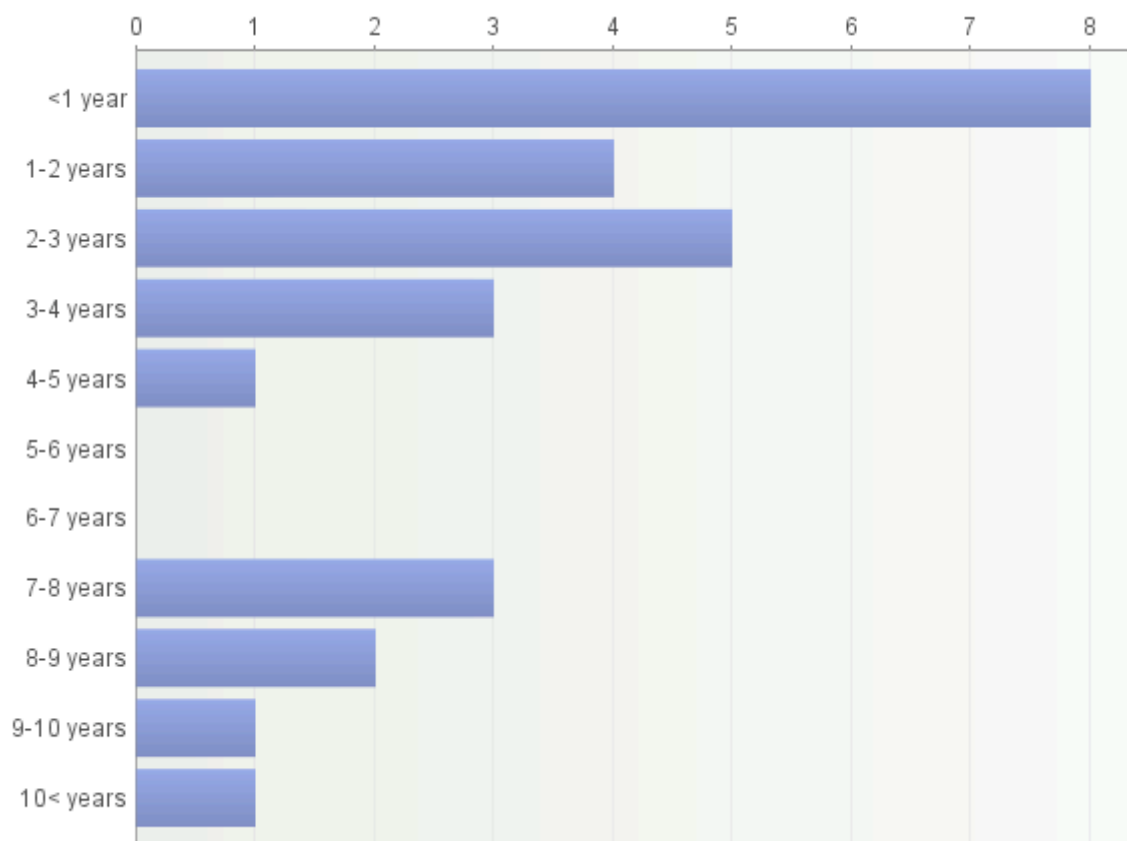
#### 5. How old were you when you established your current business?

Number of respondents: 28

- 35
- 38
- 34
- 40
- 23
- 56
- 33
- 49
- 45
- 38
- 35
- 25
- 27
- 24
- 33
- 27
- 31
- 35
- 47
- 37
- 24
- 27
- 41
- 30
- 25
- 40
- 42
- 37

## 6. How long have you been operating?

Number of respondents: 28



## 7. Is this your first business?

Number of respondents: 28



## 8. Did you have children when you started your business?

Number of respondents: 27



Open text answers: Yes, age of your children when you started operating

- 7
- 1
- 5 and 3
- Adult
- 17
- 17
- 3 & 9
- 9, 5, 3
- 5 and 7
- 2 years
- 17, 19, 20
- 21 19
- 5 and 1
- 8, 10
- 5&7

## 9. Do you know other female entrepreneurs?

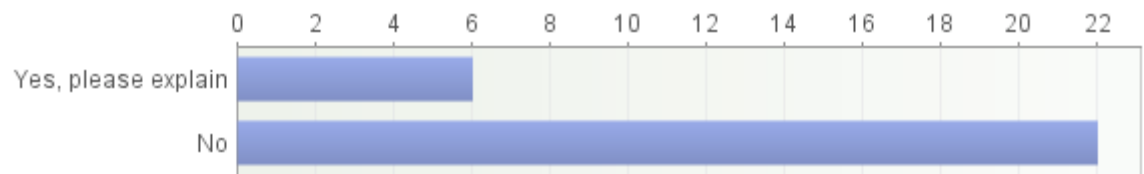
Number of respondents: 28





### 10. Have you received financial support for the business establishment or operations?

Number of respondents: 28



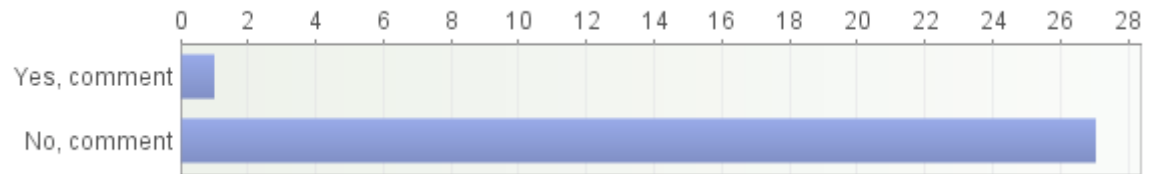
### 11. How important were the following statements to you when you made the decision to become self-employed?

Number of respondents: 28

	1	2	3	4	Total	Average
I wanted a change in life	0	4	6	18	28	3.5
I wanted to be independent	0	3	5	21	29	3.62
I did not want to work for anyone else	2	3	3	20	28	3.46
I wanted to earn more money	2	12	9	5	28	2.61
I desired better working conditions	5	6	9	8	28	2.71
I wanted to work from home	7	3	6	12	28	2.82
I have/had small children at home	16	3	2	7	28	2
I had the finance to start a business	13	7	3	5	28	2
I had the space to start a business	9	7	9	3	28	2.21
I had the equipment to start a business	8	11	4	5	28	2.21
I saw the demand on the market for a new product/service	2	5	11	10	28	3.04
I continued/joined a family business	25	1	1	1	28	1.21
I had a personal interest/hobby	3	0	6	19	28	3.46
My studies have been business related	11	2	3	12	28	2.57
I was made redundant	24	1	2	1	28	1.29
I could not find another job	25	3	0	0	28	1.11
Any other reason? Explain:	2	0	0	5	7	3.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>2.53</b>

## 12. Have you regretted your choice to start up a business?

Number of respondents: 28



## 13. Do you have any comments about the opportunities or limitations in your own business field?

Number of respondents: 20

## 14. Do you have any positive or negative comments about being a female entrepreneur?

Number of respondents: 23

## 15. Is there something else you would like to add? Any personal experiences and comments are welcome!